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ABSTRACT

This doctoral dissertation reports on a study that examined the perceptions of the relative use by academic deans of six primary administrative control mechanisms. The effects of four known determinants of organizational control use were gathered from a sample composed of both faculty and administration from four public postsecondary institutions. (The schools ranged in size from small to large, had from 5 to 69 departments, and were all within the University of Wisconsin System.) Findings indicated that goals, traditions, and the environment are major factors influencing control use by deans, with size and technology affecting control to a lesser extent. Specifically, the three major determinants of control (goals, traditions, and environment) were found to affect the deans' use of both hierarchical and non-hierarchical forms of administrative control. Findings further suggested that the aggregate effect of these three major determinants of control use, across institutions and school types, resulted in the greater use by academic deans of hierarchical forms of control compared to non-hierarchical forms. Overall, it was concluded that academic deans use multiple means of control or influence in their work and that a range of factors determines their use of these controls in academe. Contains 51 references. (Author/GLR)

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ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL EXERCISED BY ACADEMIC DEANS

by

BRIAN RUSSELL GRIESBACH

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
(Educational Administration)

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Abstract

Administrative control and influence by academic deans is difficult because they are "middle managers" serving both faculty and administration. To examine this problem, perceptions of the relative use by academic deans of six primary administrative control mechanisms and the effects of four known determinants of organizational control use were gathered from a sample composed of both faculty and administration from public post-secondary institutions. These findings reveal that academic deans make extensive use of three hierarchical forms of control: inputs, outputs, and behavior controls. However, do not rely heavily on the use of supervision in their work. Additionally, the findings reveal that deans rely moderately on the non-hierarchical controls of selection-socialization and the environment. The extensive use by deans of input, output and behavior controls, stems primarily from the authority they yield over the budget, personnel and academic programs. Furthermore, the findings indicate that two known determinants of organizational control (the environment and goals), as well as a third unexpected determinant of control, "traditions," have a major impact on control use by deans; the known factors of size and technology influence control use by deans to a lesser extent. The significance of goals, the environment, and traditions as determinants of control use by deans, helps explain the overall pattern of control use (greater reliance on hierarchical as opposed to non-hierarchical forms of control) by academic deans. Overall, these findings indicate that academic deans use multiple means of control or influence in their work and that a range of factors determines their use of these controls in academe.

Although the office of the academic dean in higher education has existed only for a century, the significance of the position has been widely recognized for many years. Riesman (1965), for example, views deans as the chief remaining force for innovation and constructive change in large university systems. Salmen (1971) has lauded deans as the most important group of administrators in the whole of higher education, for they are officers who must translate the aspirations of teachers into an organized program which will fall within the necessities of the budget. Barzun (1968), Carson (1960) and many others have described decanal roles by exploring its substantive, creative, policy and leadership dimensions.

Despite the recognized significance of the dean's role, there is a relative lack of research on these higher-education officers who are often conceptualized as middle managers. Writing in 1980, Caladarci summarizes well the status of research in the area:

> I found, with Adamic surprise, that the literature addressing this honorable estate could be read comfortably between a late breakfast and an early lunch--and that the dearth in volume was not compensated for by substance (p. 125).

Serious scholarly efforts to ameliorate this state of the deanship literature began in 1976 with Cyphert and Zimpher, who examined the dean's role, and compiled an extensive descriptive profile of a sample of deans. This work sparked investigations

by Dejnozka (1978) and Kapel and Dejnozka (1979), who studied selected role norms of deans of education. They found that faculty and department chairpersons view the dean as primarily an advocate for his or her college, rather than a bureaucratic supervisor.

On the other hand, Fullerton (1978) found two prominent issues dominate the role of the dean: (a) cultivation and promotion of progressive ideas among faculty and students, and (b) concern for the lack of time for personal pursuits. McCarty and Young (1981) also explored the role of the dean. Conceiving the dean's role as an extension to the presidential role, they found three fundamental duties associated with the deanship: (1) considering the ends and means of education, (b) selecting faculty, and (c) preparing budgets. Gould (1964) and Miller (1974) elaborate on these roles to include conflict resolution tasks. More recently, Dill (1980) concluded that with the addition of these latter tasks, the dean's role has evolved from an extension of the presidency to a precarious middle management position with political overtones. Finally, McCarty and Reyes (1987), who researched organizational models of governance as they relate to academic deans' decision making styles, found that most chairpersons across colleges and schools perceive deans engaged mostly in collegial decision making. However, some also perceived the dean as using political and bureaucratic modes of college governance.

The Problem

It can be argued that academic deans find it difficult to exercise administrative control primarily due to the presence of both administrative and faculty structures within their organizations. As a consequence of these two structures, academic deans find themselves in the precarious position of a "middle manager" who must serve two masters. In this case, both masters--faculty and administration--have different agendas as well as differing expectations for the dean. While faculty members often seek greater autonomy and self-control (and, insulation from the bureaucracy), university administration often seeks greater or tighter control within the organization. The academic dean's dilemma, then, is finding the right mix or blend of hierarchical (tight) controls and non-hierarchical (loose) controls, which will meet both faculty needs for autonomy and needs for control and accountability stemming from university administration.

Unfortunately, the nature of administrative controls used by academic deans, as well as factors which influence the deans' use of administrative controls, has not been thoroughly or systematically studied. Therefore, the focus of this study is on the relative use of administrative control mechanisms by academic deans, the overall pattern of control used by deans, and on factors which influence control use by academic deans.

Theoretical Framework

Although there is not much literature on administrative control in post-secondary education, much related literature on organizational control from a variety of organizational settings exists and provides a useful framework to guide the study of academic deans. This related literature is derived primarily from studies on business and industry and the K-12 educational sector.

Specifically, this study was guided by Peterson's (1984) theory of organizational control, which he applied to the study of principals--who are also middle managers in an educational setting. Peterson's theory of organizational control posits that a comprehensive framework including both hierarchical and non-hierarchical controls is needed to understand the work of such middle managers as principals. More specifically, Peterson identifies six common mechanisms of administrative level organizational control: four hierarchical control mechanisms (supervision, input control, behavior control, and output control) and two non-hierarchical control mechanisms (selection-socialization and the environment). Peterson also identified four primary factors which influence the type of control mechanisms used in organizations. These factors include: organizational size, goals, technology and the environment. The interaction of these factors with control mechanisms results in

patterns or a system of control which ensures that employees achieve organizational goals.

METHOD

In this study, administrative level control mechanisms and factors influencing control use by academic deans were examined by using a method of investigation which is primarily qualitative in nature and relies on interviewing as the principle means of data collection: the constant comparative method. Faculty members, department chairpersons, deans, and upper level administrators at four universities were interviewed with regard to their perceptions concerning control use by academic deans and possible factors which may influence control use by deans. More specifically, this study examined the relative use by academic deans of six forms of administrative control (input and output control, behavior control, supervision, the environment and supervision as forms of control), and the influence of four factors (size, technology, goals, the environment) on control use. Furthermore, this study searched for other possible types of control used by academic deans, as well as other factors which may influence control use by deans.

Sample

This study included chancellors, academic vice-presidents, academic deans, chairpersons, and faculty at four post-secondary institutions (within the University of Wisconsin System) that differ in terms of size and administrative complexity. One institution is a large comprehensive doctoral-granting institution. The other three are masters-level institutions. All four institutions have several distinct schools or colleges with academic deans who oversee a number of departments within each school. These schools range in size from having as few as five departments to those having as many as sixty-nine departments.

Procedure

The collection of data for this study was accomplished through three primary phases. The first phase involved identifying institutions. The second phase involved selecting and contacting subjects for personal interviews. The final phase consisted primarily of interviewing subjects using a variation of the constant comparative method of investigation.

In summary, this study was conducted using one primary means of data collection: interviews. Each individual in the sample was interviewed. Interviews were guided by a questionnaire that contained many open-ended questions designed to allow respondents to volunteer information and to elaborate on their responses.

After beginning interviews with open-ended questions, the interviewer would follow up with a set of standardized questions which relate to the dean's relative use of six primary administrative control mechanisms and four factors which have been found to influence control use in organizations. These standardized follow up questions served to probe for details and ensure coverage of the topics of control and influence. The following is an example of an open-ended question with accompanying standardized follow up questions: As a dean, how do you feel you are able to influence your faculty, and what is the nature of the influence you have over faculty in your school? Do you feel you use supervision as a form of control or influence in your work as a dean? Do you feel you use output measures as a form of control or influence in your work as a dean?

Data Analysis

Give the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study, the investigator continually searched for patterns and themes in the findings. The analysis of the data for this investigation began during the interview process when six mechanisms of control (and other control mechanisms that emerged), as well as the four factors or determinants which influence control use (and other factors which emerged) were examined. In searching for patterns or themes in these findings, attention was paid to the frequency to which content areas emerged, where they occurred in the

interview (e.g., were they spontaneously volunteered responses or solicited ones), the relative length of these responses, and to the content of these responses. By analyzing these primary aspects of the samples responses, prevailing patterns of control use by deans as well as the relative strength of factors influencing control use were established.

More specifically, these findings are presented and discussed using a format which includes the four following steps: (1) defining the control mechanism or factors influencing control use, (2) stating a core proposition which relates these variables to control or influence exercised by deans, (3) offering a rationale or explanation for the relationships stated in the propositions, and (4) offering supportive evidence for propositions.

To conserve space, only propositions derived from evidence in this study's findings are reported here; the rationale and evidence for each proposition have been omitted. Please contact the dissertation archives office at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for a complete copy of this study.

FINDINGS

Types of Control

This section summarizes the findings concerning perceptions of the relative use by academic deans of six established forms of

administrative control (input, output and behavior control, supervision, the environment, and selection-socialization). Also discussed are the additional findings on factors influencing control use by deans. These factors include size, technology, goals, the environment, as well as factors which emerged as significant from the data. The findings concerning both types of control used and factors influencing control use are presented in order of importance. With regard to findings on the six types of control, the first three discussed are extensively used by deans while the latter three are moderately used by deans. All findings discussed in this chapter are based on a variety of institutional settings and are derived from the aggregate sample representing deans from both schools of letters and sciences and professional schools.

Input Control

Input control can be defined as control or influence by deans through constraining the amount, use, and flow of resources to departments or organizational units.

Proposition: Input control, exercised chiefly through the budget and personnel, is the major form of administrative control used by academic deans.

Output Control

Output control refers to control by assessing the performance of employees or the results of their work. This

control is sometimes referred to as management by objectives, and has been found by scholars to exist in all types of organizations.

Proposition: Output control is another major form of administrative control used by academic deans, primarily through their evaluation of faculty research, teaching, and service.

Subproposition: Academic deans use additional (secondary) forms of "output" to aid them in their work.

Behavior Control

Behavior control generally refers to the use of rules, procedures or directives to standardize and regulate work. In organizations where these forms of control affect large numbers of people, they are described as "policies", which are expected to be followed in the future by employees. Behavior controls in organizations are known to be widely used and have led to much research in a variety of settings.

Proposition: A third major form of control used by academic deans is "behavior control" which is primarily exercised through their formation and enforcement of policies.

Supervision

Supervision is one of the common and traditional forms of organizational control. This method of control involves the direct observation of employees by a line officer who typically provides feedback to the employee on his or her performance.

Proposition: Academic deans use direct supervision to a limited extent, relying more heavily on the use of informal supervisory processes such as "mentoring."

Environmental Control

Typically, the environment acts as part of an organizational control system through agents that serve as sources of information used to evaluate employee performance, or as a criteria for program effectiveness.

Proposition: In response to many external sources, academic deans use a wide variety of environmental forms of control in their work.

Selection/Socialization

Scholars discuss selection-socialization as a process by which norms, values, and modes of action are internalized and function as organizational rules. The evaluation, monitoring and feedback by these rules is initiated by the employee and can be conceived as forms of internal supervision. Selection operates as a control when employees are chosen because they ascribe to commonly held norms or values within the organization.

Proposition: Academic deans rely heavily on selection as a means of control or influence, however, do not actively engage in socialization (of faculty); instead, they delegate this activity to others.

In summary, the overall findings of this study indicate a pattern of administrative control use by academic deans, across institutions and school types, which is characterized by deans relying more heavily upon hierarchical forms of control, as

opposed to a lesser use of non-hierarchical forms of control or influence. This pattern of control use by deans is the aggregate result of a number of propositions and subpropositions about the relative use by deans of six primary administrative control mechanisms. More specifically, these findings reveal that academic deans make extensive use of the following hierarchical (tight forms of control) controls: input, output, and behavior control, while they make moderate use of the hierarchical control of supervision in their work. With regard to non-hierarchical (loser forms of control) forms of control, these overall findings indicate that although academic deans make use of these means of administrative control or influence within their schools, they do so only to a moderate degree. In particular, the moderate use of these controls by academic deans included their use of selection-socialization and the environment as forms of control.

Further examining the propositions which emerged from these findings explains this pattern of control use (hierarchical vs. non-hierarchical or loose) by academic deans. From these propositions it is evident that deans use traditional hierarchical (tight) forms of control with regard to the budget, personnel and academic programs. Thus, it can be inferred that these three facets of their work constitute the areas over which academic deans have the greatest potential for control and influence. On the other hand, bowing to such traditions as "faculty autonomy and faculty shared governance" academic deans

do not extensively use direct supervision (a very traditional means of administrative control) to control or influence faculty. Similarly, although deans do use selection-socialization and forms of control stemming from the environment in their work, the influence or control they exert through these means is indirect in nature. More specifically, these findings indicate that through their use of the "environment" as a form of control, academic deans may engage in various forms of program review or ensure that other standards are enforced in order to address the needs of a number of exigencies. Finally, the indirect nature of the influence they exert through their use of "selection-socialization" controls stems from their promulgation of certain norms, values or expectations which must be arrived at and enforced in a collegial manner with departments.

Findings: Determinants of Control

To help understand control use by academic deans within their organizations, this study also examined the relative impact of four primary determinants of organizational control (size, technology, goals, and the environment) on control use by deans. Furthermore, this study also searched for additional possible determinants which may influence control use by deans. From this search for additional determinants, tradition in academe emerged as an additional major determinant of control use by deans.

Goals

For the purposes of this study, goals can generally be defined as organizational objectives occurring at either the institutional, school or departmental levels.

Proposition: Goals are a major determinant of administrative control use by academic deans, which, to some extent affect each control used by deans in their work.

Environment

For the purpose of this study, the "environment" as a determinant of organizational control, refers to external sources (ones outside the dean's administrative office), which may affect administrative control use by academic deans.

Proposition: The "environment" operates both as a form of administrative control used by academic deans as well as a major determinant of control use--primarily affecting their use of input, output, and behavior controls.

Tradition

As a determinant of administrative control, "tradition" can be defined as organizational norms, expectations or practices which are rooted in an organization's past.

Proposition: Tradition in academe is a major determinant of administrative control use by academic deans which primarily affects their use of inputs, behavior, supervision, outputs, and selection-socialization as forms of control.

Size

As a determinant of administrative control use by academic deans, size refers to the number of organizational units or departments and is a factor which the literature has traditionally related to structural components such as diversity.

Proposition: Size is not a major determinant of administrative control use by academic deans, however, may affect the use by deans of input control, output control, and supervision.

Technology

As a determinant of administrative control use, technology refers to the effects of the means or ways in which an organization's work is performed or control use.

Proposition: Technology is not a major determinant of administrative control use by academic deans, however does affect their use of "inputs" as forms of control.

Summary

In summary, this study's findings on determinants of administrative control use by academic deans indicates that goals, traditions, and the environment are major factors influencing control use by deans, with size and technology affecting control use by deans to a lesser extent. Specifically, the three major determinants of control (goals, traditions, and environment), were found to affect the use by deans of both hierarchical and non-hierarchical forms of administrative control, with each of these factors having pervasive effects on

their use of these controls. On the other hand, the determinants of size and technology have more circumscribed effects, which primarily influence the dean's use of input and output controls. It is suggested that the aggregate effect of these three major determinants of control use, across institutions and school types, results in the greater use by deans of hierarchical forms of control in comparison to a lesser use by deans of non-hierarchical forms of control. Nevertheless, this apparent relationship between the three major determinants and a greater use by deans of hierarchical forms of control is not exclusive, as both traditions and goals, were also found to have effects on the use by deans of the non-hierarchical forms of control: the environment and selection-socialization.

CONCLUSION

Overall findings across school types and institutions indicate that academic deans use a range of administrative control mechanisms, both hierarchical and non-hierarchical, to carry out their roles. These aggregate findings lead to a number of propositions regarding their relative use of six administrative control mechanisms and the affects of five factors (or determinants) on control use by deans. Specifically, four propositions and two sub-propositions indicate that inputs, outputs, behavior control, and the environment are major forms of control or influence used by academic deans. Two other

propositions indicate that deans use selection-socialization and supervision as forms of control in their work, but that these two latter forms of control are used to a lesser extent. Additionally, this study's findings led to a number of propositions which indicate that tradition, goals, and the environment are major factors or determinants which affect control use by deans, while evidence indicates that technology and size are factors which affect control use by deans to a lesser extent.

In particular, the findings which indicate that inputs, outputs, behavior controls, and the environment are extensively used by academic deans across school types and institutions, are generally consistent with the literature on both, organizational control and academic deans, which suggests the importance of these controls for deans within their organizations. This study's findings which indicate a lesser reliance by academic deans on the use of supervision in their work, is also consistent with the literature on this control. However, the findings which indicate a lesser reliance by deans on selection-socialization as a form of control was not suggested by the literature and is probably accounted for by the fact that departments are also heavily involved in the selection and socialization of faculty.

Finally, this study's findings which indicate that size, goals, and the environment are major factors or determinants of control use by deans are generally consistent with previous

research suggesting the affects of these factors on control use by deans within their organizations. However, the unexpected findings regarding the major affects of tradition on control use by deans and the lesser affects of technology on control use by deans, were not findings which were suggested by the literature. Clearly, the importance of tradition as a determinant of control use by deans is explained by and directly attributable to the ethos of higher education institutions as organizations, while technology affected control use by deans as the result of the diversity of disciplines--which they oversee within their respective schools.

These overall findings indicate that, given the complexity of higher education institutions as organizations and the complexity of the dean's role, deans must employ multiple controls and a mix of both hierarchical and non-hierarchical controls to carry out their roles. Additionally, a wide range of factors may affect the relative use by deans of these various forms of control.

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